

# 'Inadequate' faith school failed to teach reproduction in science

Posted: Wed, 13 Oct 2021

A Jewish independent faith school has been criticised by inspectors for refusing to teach about reproduction in science classes.

Beis Ruchel D'Satmar London, a "strictly Orthodox Jewish" school for girls age 3-16 in Stamford Hill, was rated "inadequate" in an [Ofsted report](#) published yesterday.

During the inspection, held 8–10 June, leaders said "no aspect of sex education is taught in the school, not even reproduction in the context of an academic subject like science," according to the report.

The report said all content of the GCSE course is taught to Year 10 pupils, "except for reproduction". This means pupils are "disadvantaged at the outset" when preparing for science examinations.

The report said the "strongly held", "collective" view of parents was that "such teaching should take place in the home only, by parents and carers".

Pupils are "not given the opportunity to discuss issues about some important aspects of their personal development" and so are "not prepared well for life in modern Britain", the report said.

Teaching pupils of secondary school age relationships and sex education (RSE) is a statutory requirement.

Ofsted also criticised the school for not teaching pupils to "respect people who are of a different sexual orientation" or "people who change their gender". Sexual orientation and gender reassignment are protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010. Schools are [required](#) to teach about these protected characteristics to secondary-age pupils in an age-appropriate manner.

## Forced marriage concerns

In February a [report](#) from Jewish counter-extremism group Nahamu highlighted how a lack of relationships and sex education (RSE) contributes to forced marriage in strictly-Orthodox Jewish communities.

It said the lack of RSE in strictly-Orthodox Jewish schools means engaged couples may not be prepared for sexual relations, may not understand consent, and may not recognise abusive behaviours.

It also said the exclusion of any reference to LGBT+ people in Orthodox Jewish schools means LGBT+ people in these communities face "very serious issues of consent" when presented with a universal expectation of early, heterosexual marriage.

## Other issues

Ofsted's report said children in the early years "do not get off to a good start" as children and adults communicate in Yiddish and the teaching of phonics "is held back for too long". Additionally, children do not take books home to practise reading with their parents, the report said.

The development of love for reading among older pupils was "limited by the choice of texts" available in the school.

In the past other Orthodox Jewish schools have been [criticised](#) for their limited choice of books, including Yesodey Hatorah Senior Girls' School, also in Stamford Hill.

Additionally, the report said the school 's leaders and governors "do not actively promote the fundamental British values of mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs."

In 2019 the school was [barred](#) from admitting new pupils that academic year after persistently failing standards. In an [inspection](#) that year, school inspectors were prevented from speaking to pupils about their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

## **NSS comment**

NSS head of education Alastair Lichten said: "With the problem of forced marriages in strictly-Orthodox Jewish communities increasingly coming to light, it is more important than ever to ensure all children, regardless of their parents' religious background, have access to age-appropriate, objective and inclusive RSE.

"Ofsted is right to penalise this school for refusing to teach about reproduction even in science. Children's rights to an education that keeps them safe and prepares them for adult life must not be undermined by extremist religious ideology, no matter how strongly-held."

## **Notes**

- Beis Ruchel D'Satmar London is registered for 810 girls between the ages of three and 16 years. However, according to Ofsted's report, there are 844 girls aged three to 16 years on the school's roll. The permitted number of pupils was revised by the registration authority from 200 to 810 in November 2020. According to Ofsted, "the school continues to be in breach of its registration agreement with the Department for Education".

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